On a closer view the far-famed city did not disappoint him.

*To Isaac D'lsraeli.*

CONSTANTINOPLE,
. *Jan.* 11,
1831.

I leave Constantinople to your imagination. Cypress groves and mosquish domes, masses of habitations grouped on gentle acclivities rising out of the waters, millions of minarets, a sea like a river covered with innumerable long thin boats as swift as gondolas, and far more gay, being carved and gilt — all these, and then when filled with a swarming population in rich and brilliant and varied costume, will afford you a more lively, and certainly not a more incorrect, idea than half a dozen pages worthy of Horace Smith.

There are two things here which cannot be conceived without inspection — the Bosphorus and the Bazaar. Conceive the ocean not broader than the Thames at Gravesend, with shores with all the variety and beauty of the Khine, covered with palaces, mosques, villages, groves of cypress, arid woods of Spanish chestnuts; the view of the Euxine at the end is the most sublime [and mystical] [1] thing I can remember. The Bazaar would delight you more than the Bosphorus. Fancy the Burlington Arcade, or some of the Parisian passages and panoramas; fancy perhaps a square mile of ground covered with these arcades intersecting each other in all directions and full of every product of the empire, from diamonds to dates. The magnificence, novelty, and variety of the goods on sale, the whole nation of shopkeepers all in different dress, the crowds of buyers from all parts of the world, are just to be hinted at.

Here every people have a characteristic costume. Turks, Greeks, Jews, and Armenians are the staple population; the latter seem to predominate. The Armenians wear round and very unbecoming black caps and robes; the Jews a black hat wreathed with a white handkerchief; the Greeks black turbans; the Turks indulge in all combinations of costume. The meanest merchant in the Bazaar looks like a Sultan in an Eastern fairy tale. This is merely to be ascribed to the marvellous brilliancy of their dyes, which is one of the most remarkable circumstances in their social life, and which never has been explained to me. A common pair of slippers that you push on in the street is tinged of a vermilion or a lake so extraordinary that I can compare their colour to nothing but the warmest beam of a summer sunset.

[1] The words in brackets are from a letter to Mrs. Austen.